

PIDDUCK (Isaac)

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PROPOSED

NATIONAL MEDICAL

ESTABLISHMENT;

FOR THE

GOVERNMENT OF THE MEDICAL BODY;

AND FOR THE

GUARDIANSHIP OF THE HEALTH AND LIVES

OF THE COMMUNITY.

BY MEDICUS.

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NATIONAL MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT.

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WITH a magnificent Church Establishment for the cure of souls, and with a large Law Establishment for the care of the persons and property of the community ; is it not a strange anomaly that there should not exist any National Medical Establishment to take care of their health and lives ?

Whilst the Church has her Archbishops and Bishops with princely revenues, and the Law its Chancellors and Judges supported by noble salaries, Physic is not only unsupported, but it has in reality no political existence ; the Medical Profession is unrecognised by the State. Assigning the first place to the cure of souls, for

“What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” surely the care of the health and life of the community is not of less value than that of their persons and property; for “All a man hath will he give for his life.” Is it not, therefore, a strange anomaly, that we have NO NATIONAL MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT?

The difficulties in the way of forming such an establishment are threefold.

1st. The spirit of independence or impatience of control, existing in the medical body.

2d. The want of fixed and settled principles to regulate medical practice.

3d. The vested rights of chartered medical corporations.

Before the formation of a national medical establishment, the medical body must lay aside their impatience of control and willingly submit to rightly constituted authority.

The medical body must agree upon certain fixed principles to regulate the practice of physic, such as those furnished by pathological anatomy and chemical therapeutics.

And, lastly, the chartered medical corporations must agree to relinquish their vested rights.

It is proposed that the National Medical Establishment shall be constituted as follows.

1st. A Physician and Surgeon in-chief at a salary of 5,000*l.* each, who shall be *ex-officio* Physician and Surgeon to the Crown.

2d. Two Secretaries, a Physician and Surgeon, at a salary of 3,000*l.* each.

3d. Twenty-four Counsellors, twelve Physicians, and twelve Surgeons, at a salary of 2,000*l.* each.

The appointment of these officers to be vested in the Crown. The selection to be made from duly qualified Physicians and Surgeons who have held public appointments, and who have been at least thirty years in practice, and the appointments to be for life. The Physician and Surgeon in-chief, the Secretaries and the Counsellors to be restricted from private practice, by the penalty of losing their office; and by the same penalty, for any other malversation.

The duties of the Council to be twofold.

I. PROFESSIONAL, and II. PUBLIC.

I. PROFESSIONAL.

1st. To examine all candidates for degrees in medicine and surgery, and that the same degree

(DOCTOR of MEDICINE) be conferred on all candidates, wherever they may have been educated, who shall pass the examination.

2d. To examine all medical Officers for the Army and Navy, and to appoint all Inspectors of military and naval hospitals out of the Army and Navy medical body, accordingly as they have distinguished themselves in these several departments of the public service.

3d. To examine all Apothecaries, who shall be authorized by the Council to compound and dispense medicines, and all Chemists, who shall also be authorized to prepare and sell drugs, &c., who shall also be restricted from prescribing and practising physic. That all DOCTORS of MEDICINE shall be authorized by their degree to compound and dispense medicines, and to prepare and sell drugs, as well as to practise medicine in all parts of Her Majesty's dominions.

4th. To investigate and decide in all cases of malpractice and moral professional delinquency in the medical body.

5th. To determine all professional disputes, which may arise between members of the Medical body.

6th. To prevent all unqualified persons, of whom such vast numbers live by imposing on the sufferings and credulity of the public, from practising physic or compounding and dispensing medicines, or preparing and selling drugs, by certain penalties to be recovered on summary conviction.

## II. PUBLIC.

1st. To appoint all Commissioners of Lunacy, all Sanatory and Poor-law Commissioners and Coroners ; to be selected out of the duly qualified medical body. These several appointments being for life, at a stated salary, those who hold them to be restricted from private practice, by the penalty of losing their appointments.

2d. To investigate and decide in all cases of alleged insanity, in criminals, which are to be referred to this Council by the Judges of the Criminal Courts, before they are tried under their several indictments.

3d. To investigate and decide in all cases which relate to the Sanatory condition of Towns, Churches, Burying-grounds, Places of Public Resort, Workhouses, Prisons, as regards their



supply of good water and wholesome food, ventilation, drainage, &c., upon information laid before the Council.

To this proposal various objections may be urged.

1st. Those members of the profession who enjoy certain privileges under the existing chartered Medical Corporations as teachers and examiners, might be unwilling to relinquish those privileges. But this objection is more than counterbalanced by the consideration that those are the first persons who must necessarily be regarded as the most eligible for the Crown appointments, to the offices created under the new National Medical Establishment. Besides the twenty-eight Officers created by this proposed establishment, there would be all the Commissioners and Coroners taken from the medical body now engaged in practice, which would make room for the same number of aspirants for the situations, public or private, which are filled by those Officers, Commissioners, and Coroners.

2d. The existing independence and uncontrolled exercise of their privileges by the



great body of medical practitioners would be profitably exchanged for the protection of their rights and the respectability of their position, arising out of such a national establishment of the medical profession. For what protection do they now enjoy against the encroachments of unqualified practitioners ?

What public respectability do they derive from their position in society as medical men ?

What authority can they exercise in the prevention and cure of diseases occasioned by popular ignorance and private cupidity, particularly in the habitations of the poor ?

What opportunity have they of vindicating the claims of the insane to a merciful consideration of their case, when they violate the law and become amenable to justice ?

What security has the public against unduly qualified practitioners being sent forth by the different chartered bodies, so long as the teachers, who are paid for teaching, are the examiners of their own pupils, who pay them both for instruction and examination ? The proposed examination by the Medical Board, composed of persons who are neither teachers

nor practitioners, would be sufficiently impartial and searching; must necessarily secure a body of competent men, and exclude those who are incompetent.

This proposed method of examination would also strike at the root of a most unfair monopoly and open the door for the entrance of many men of the highest literary and professional attainments, who are now excluded, because their attainments have not been made in a certain school, or under a certain junto of teachers, whose interest it is to draw pupils to their respective schools, and not to reject any as dishonoured or disqualified from their own instructions. This proposal would also act as a most beneficial stimulus to exertion, and raise the moral character of medical men and their ambition above the sordid gains of private practice, by placing within their reach a rank and station highly honourable, and a competency for the close of life, free from the overwhelming fatigue and anxious toils of their earlier professional career.

The proposed plan would also relieve the Medical Profession from the painful position in

which they are often placed by having their interests discussed in the Houses of Parliament by men who are necessarily unacquainted with, and wholly unable satisfactorily to adjust, the many conflicting claims which are, in our unsettled state, so often submitted to their consideration. Finally, it would place this noble Profession, second only in importance to that which has respect to the everlasting interests of man, in a position, in this great nation, so justly its due, from which it has been so long and so anomalously excluded; which is, we might almost say, not only of the highest moment, but indispensably necessary to the honour of the Profession itself, the promotion and preservation of the health and happiness of the community, and suitable to the wisdom and dignity of this great empire.

